

## Claims

- [c1] 1. A business method for reducing non-value-added data activity across a plurality of distributed business departments, the method comprising:  
populating a data structure with data sets generated at each of the plurality of distributed business departments;  
eliminating data gaps, duplications and inconsistencies within the data structure;  
defining access, ownership, management, data source, data control and data dependencies attributes for each data set within the data structure;  
aligning each of the distributed business departments' business processes and corresponding data requirements to the data structure data sets based on the attributes defined for each data set; and  
updating the alignment in response to changes in the business processes and corresponding data requirements of the plurality of business departments as well as changes in the attributes defined for each data set.
- [c2] 2. The method of claim 1 additionally comprising compiling a glossary summarizing the data sets and corresponding attributes wherein the glossary is provided to the plurality of distributed business departments to facilitate the step of aligning each of the distributed business departments' business processes and corresponding data requirements to the data structure.
- [c3] 3. The method of claim 1 additionally comprising defining a retention period attribute for a data set wherein the data set is deleted from the data structure upon expiration of the defined retention period.
- [c4] 4. The method of claim 1 additionally comprising the steps of defining an update frequency for a data set and updating content and attributes for the data set according to the defined update frequency.
- [c5] 5. A data structure embodied within a computer readable medium, the data structure comprising a plurality of data sets wherein each data set possesses the following attributes:

- (a)ownership for defining a name of a person or organization who owns content embodied within the data set;
- (b)membership for defining data items which make up the data set;
- (c)codification for defining terminology qualifying the data items which make up the data set;
- (d)source for defining the source of the data set;
- (e)management for defining a person or entity responsible for managing the data set;
- (f)access for defining which business entities may access the data set; and
- (g)control metrics for defining an integrity protocol for the data set.

- [c6] 6.The data structure of claim 5 wherein each data set additionally possesses a retention period attribute for defining the amount of time that the data set is to be retained within the data structure.
- [c7] 7.The data structure of claim 5 wherein each data set additionally possesses a dependents attribute for defining distributed business departments who require data items within the data set to carry out their respective business processes.
- [c8] 8.The data structure of claim 7 wherein each data set additionally possesses an update frequency attribute for defining the rate at which the data set is to be updated.